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Reader in Tamil (Retd.), Madras University

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THE TAMIL NAD PUBLICATIONS
33, Broadway, Madras.

A. No. 19286

35/3

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Our November Release

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RESEARCH IN DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

(being the Presidential Address
at the Dravidian Languages Section,
the All-India Oriental Conference, Nagpur, 1946)

By

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Published by
MADRAS PREMIER CO.,

Selling Agents
THE TAMIL NAD PUBLICATIONS
33, Broadway, Madras.
1946



Printed at Thompson & Co., Ltd., (Minerva Press),
33, Broadway, Madras, (P.I.C. No. MS. 15).
and published by the Madras Premier Co., 3 Perianna
Maistry Street, G.T., Madras, (P.I.C. No. Ms. 39-A).

160
160

Dr. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai

35-3

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

All-India Oriental Conference

13th Session, Nagpur, 21st October, 1946.

Section : Dravidian Languages and Culture

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BROTHER DELEGATES, LADIES & GENTLEMEN,

Let me thank you at the outset for the honour you have done me in electing me as the president of the Dravidian Section which has been formed for the first time at this, the 13th, Session of the Oriental Conference. It is an honour which I value greatly; but the duty it imposes upon me is indeed onerous. I hope, however, you will extend your kind co-operation enabling me to carry out my task successfully.

A separate section for the Dravidian languages has long been a necessity. Year by year there has been a growing strength of researchers in this field. The research work also has been growing in importance, urgency and complexity. So little has been done and so vast is the subject that the work here needs more time to be devoted to it than what the general language section can afford. The workers will not at all be benefited if their papers are merely taken as read. These considera-

tions must have weighed with the Executive Committee in making their decision and they must be congratulated on this wise step.

That we have allowed the study of our mother-tongues to fall into neglect is no secret. In our educational system, they have long been relegated to an insignificant position. Their legitimate place has been usurped by the English language, just as in our national life, we, the rightful owners of the country, have been made to occupy an unenviable position by our foreign masters. Even now, after we have reached the threshold of National Freedom, the question of the medium of instruction is being debated hotly and there are not wanting scholars who champion the cause of the foreign medium. This shows the depth of degradation to which we have fallen. Unless our mother-tongues are made the media in all stages of our education without exception, our languages will not grow, will not meet all our needs, and will not be helpful in the acquisition of knowledge. They will famish and die of starvation. Another aspect also must be borne in mind. In the formative period of our life, we shall be wasting a few precious years in learning a foreign medium. Such a medium will be a handicap to the average man and his knowledge acquired through it will necessarily lack vitality, will be a matter of memory and

not of complete assimilation. I am not unmindful of the great advantages we have derived by our contact with western culture and by our study of the English language; and I have no doubt that our present national regeneration is in no small measure the result of our western education. To say this is one thing; but it is quite another to say that we should for ever, out of gratitude, remain slaves physically and mentally. Slavery is an unnatural condition and the sooner it is wiped out, the better for the whole world.

In the field of scholarship and research also, our languages have suffered a similar neglect. Here the Sanskrit language has taken the place of honour and this pre-eminent position is in a large measure justified. For ages the Sanskrit language has been cultivated throughout the length and breadth of our motherland. All our national treasures lie stored up in this sacred linguistic recess. Almost every department of knowledge known to mankind is represented in this ancient language. Almost every section of the people in our land has, by its distinctive contribution, enriched this language and literature. It has profoundly influenced the growth and development of almost all the living languages in India. It has enjoyed the position of a lingua franca in this sub-continent of ours. In the realm of human thought, it places Indians on a

level not at all inferior to any nationality of ancient or mediaeval times. It forms an excellant background to our future progress. We, as Indians, feel proud of this ancient, glorious heritage of ours. But there are *other* considerations which we must take into account. Our just pride in our past has always made us turn back to it at every step, without sufficient thought either of the present or the future, and considering our future progress, research in this field must be characterised as being least serviceable. The dazzling glory of this language has blinded us to its true relation to the languages of the people and led us to attribute divinity to it. It has also induced in some of us the belief that the summit of human knowledge has been reached. This cannot be said to be quite healthy. Eminent scholars, both Indian and foreign—scholars of all nationalities—have been, for over a century and a half, unremitting in their exclusive devotion to research in this particular field. That this exclusive application is a sad mistake even in the limited field of philology will be apparent from the following observations of Prof. Jespersen in his 'Language, Its Nature, Development and Origin':—

• Another feature of the linguistic science of these (early) days is the almost exclusive-occupation of the student with dead languages, later developments (were)

left to specialists who were more or less considered to be outside the sphere of Comparative Linguistics and even of the science of language in general, though it would have been a much more correct view to include them in both, and though much more could really be learnt of the life of language from these studies than from comparisons made in the spirit of Bopp.' (pp. 67-68.)

'The same authority considers that a study of the vernaculars is an excellent corrective, supplementing and correcting as it does the results of philosophical investigation into the classical languages. Another important aspect also must be clearly understood. The Sanskrit language reached its limits of perfection and came to a dead stop long ago. There can be no progress for it. Its noble purpose, except the cultural aspect of it which is for all time, has been more than fulfilled. It exists as a vast field for research and, rich in its varied treasures of antiquity, it offers unlimited scope for scholarly work in this direction. But its normal life has spent itself. It lives now through our vernaculars and it serves as a vitalising, nourishing agent for the living organisms of vernacular languages. The greatest merit of our vernaculars is that they throb with robust vitality, that they are living and while there is life, there is room for progress. Research in these living languages is

productive. We can increase their usefulness and we can perfect them as media of thought by observing their laws of growth. We can perfect them more and more and in this process, the Sanskrit language is bound to be of great service.

Let me once more repeat that the untold riches of the Sanskrit language must for ever engage the attention of research scholars all over the world. And this must never be neglected. At the same time, let me remind you that Indology does not exhaust itself by research work in this particular field alone. For the reasons stated above, our vernaculars deserve equal attention, if not more. Neglect of their study is criminal to the last degree and it is suicidal in the long run. It is surprising that we have not realised this. Each one of us can apply himself satisfactorily only to a limited field of research ; but it is absolutely necessary that we should understand the general lie of the land, and the relative importance of the several fields of activity. We must also find fresh fields of research which will help to supplement and correct the results obtained in the older and well-established fields. Moreover our vernacular languages and literatures are also rich and of great antiquity. This is especially true of Tamil whose extant literature goes back to the beginning of the Christian Era. From the philological aspect, this

language is, in the words of Dr. Caldwell, 'probably the earliest cultivated of all the Dravidian idioms, the most copious, and contains the largest portion and the richest variety of indubitably ancient forms.' We, the Tamils, possess one of the noblest literatures of the world. In poetic content, in facts of antiquarian interest and in cultural value, our languages are in no way inferior to Sanskrit and we legitimately pride ourselves on this. Falling in line with these observations, a Dravidian section has now been opened ; and that it should have been done when the Indian Government has entered on a new phase of life augurs well for its future. It is also a pleasure to remind ourselves that the first Dravidian Section has been originated in a province which has first stood for the rights of the Indian languages in official and other public proceedings.

A few years back, a distinguished personage paid a visit to the University of Madras. He was taken round by the then Vice-Chancellor to the several departments of research. When he came to the language section, his curiosity was roused and he asked what sort of research this particular section was engaged in. I could very well see that at the back of his mind he was feeling that there was no scope for research here and that the departments were kept more or less as shows or

ornaments, though useless from the view-point of national economy. It was sometime before I could convince him of the real necessity. The distinguished personage is representative of a type—alas, all too common in our country. I am mentioning this just to show that there is a large amount of distrust with regard to research in languages, even among educated circles. It is our lot to carry on our work in an atmosphere of general distrust. The step-motherly treatment accorded to our language studies is merely symptomatic of this general attitude. The sooner we dispel this distrust, the better for research in languages.

The reason why this distrust prevails is that the average man thinks that he, as much as any specialist, is qualified to carry on investigation in this particular field and reach conclusions. No specialist is needed and if any person claims to be a specialist, he must certainly be putting forward a claim to which has no right: so he believes. And nothing is done to prevent this erroneous belief. So far as the science subjects are concerned, he dares not entertain any such belief. The absurdity would be too obvious. That language studies also stand on the same footing must be made clear to such self-complacent men. A consideration of the scope and nature of the several subjects comprised in these studies will convince any one that this is

a branch of research requiring special knowledge, equipment and training. I shall give below a survey of language-research, marking out the most important of the fields. It will be simply a recapitulation of topics familiar to you who are all specialists.

Language studies fall under two groups, viz., language proper and literature. The former may be divided into (a) General linguistics and (b) Dravidian linguistics, which is our immediate concern. General linguistics deals with the (i) origin of languages, (ii) language classification and families, (iii) linguistic atlas, (iv) psychology of language and (v) semasiology, i.e., the science of word-meaning. Dravidian linguistics deals with the affiliation of this particular family, with its cultivated and uncultivated languages, with comparative Dravidian grammar and philology and also with the re-construction of the hypothetical proto-Dravidian. Taking any one of our languages we have to study its standard form, its dialects, its colloquial forms, its speech-levels, its travel abroad and the foreign and other influences on it. Under the heading of the standard form, we have to study grammar, etymology comprising morphology and semantics, syntax, vocabulary, phonology both experimental and historical, orthoepy, history of the alphabet and script including orthography and

palaeography. Grammar is a study of the behaviour of words and the usage of common speech. Historical, descriptive and comparative Grammars have to be grouped under this and when we distinguish old, middle and modern language, this branch becomes a highly complicated study. The vocabulary also has to be viewed and studied from several standpoints, native-words, loan-words, word mix-ups, slangs, officialese, journalese, obsolete words, etc. We have to study names also, such as surnames, place-names, etc., and we have to think of several dictionaries, dictionary on historical lines, etymological dictionary, dictionary of scientific and technical terms, of slang, of difficult words, of synonyms and antonyms, of phrases and idioms, of rhymes and of numbered groups. Thesaurus also must be included in this category.

Besides these, there are some ancillary studies to be pursued. Under this head, we must mention linguistic palaeontology based on the study of words in the proto-Dravidian and on the study of mythology, legend and folk-lore from a comparative standpoint. Racial problems also have to be studied here.

Turning now to literature. We may study the literature of a language, say Tamil, or we may make a comparative study of the literatures of two or more languages, say Dravidian literature or

Indian literature. In the study of a single literature, we have four important branches, viz., editorial work, literary criticism, literary history and treatment of historical and other materials, besides two helpful pursuits, viz., cataloguing and bibliography. Literary criticism naturally divides itself into two branches, viz., general and special. The former deals with the canons of criticism, with art and literature, with imagination, form and function, with style, rhetoric and metre, with the milieu of literature comprising literature and life, literature and society etc., and with attitudes in literature such as humanism, idealism, romanticism, realism, naturalism. The latter, i.e., special literary criticism, may deal with the individual poet, individual work, specific genre or period, or specific topic such as music, musical instruments, etc. In literary history, chronology has to be settled for several works and authors; and it will be a branch by itself. Literary biographies, including a dictionary of National Biography will come in for consideration here. Then general literary histories have to be prepared. The latter comprise genre and periods, old, middle and modern. Under genre, we have to include drama, fiction, poetry and several other types of literature. In this connection a dictionary of literature will be of great help. There are considerable historical materials in our languages, especially so in Tamil, chiefly in the

form of inscriptions and copperplate grants and these must engage our attention as a separate branch. Mythology, legend and folk-lore, comprising motif-index and comparative studies, yield us substantial historical and pre-historical materials and these along with proverbs and popular sayings form another important branch. The history of specific subjects and topics, such as medicine, astrology, amusements, riddles, etc., makes a third branch of study. Social History, culture and civilization along with witchcraft magic and spirits and with beliefs and practices, totemism etc., form yet another branch, the fourth of this group.

Only the most important of the several fields of research in languages are sketched above; but the accompanying two tabular statements of the appendix give a fuller indication of its scope.

It must be obvious to any one who glances through these tables that research in languages is a rich and wide field which must be undertaken by persons especially equipped and trained for the task. Also, research in this field is inexhaustible. The more we work in these several branches, the more we find the necessity of intense application on a wider scale. Our subject seems to grow with the growth of our knowledge. As Sage Valluvar puts it, 'the more we know, the more we realise our ignorance.'

Let me now briefly indicate what we have achieved and what works need our immediate attention. I can speak with knowledge only about Tamil and in the following remarks I naturally devote myself to that language in particular. But I believe what I say here applies to the other Dravidian languages as well, *mutatis mutandis*.

The general studies in language involve a knowledge of psychology and the general studies in literature, a knowledge of aesthetics and fine arts. Research in literature is comparatively less complicated; but even here we have not made any appreciable advance. In reality, our research is in its infant stage and this is particularly so, in regard to Tamil. But there is one exception and that is editorial work. A number of brilliant scholars laboured in this field. I may mention the names of Thandavaraya Mudaliar, Vedagiri Mudaliar, Saravaperumal Iyer, Visakapperumal Iyer, Arumukha Navalar, Rao Babadur Damodaram Pillai and last but not least Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. V. Swaminatha Iyer. These scholars are responsible for the valuable editions of *Tolkappiyam*, the *Sangam* classics and other important works. The Tamils have every reason to be proud of these scholars. But there is still work to be done. Definitive editions of these works with all the critical apparatus of modern scholarship, discussing readings, etc.,

are still a desideratum. Moreover, a great number of works are available only in manuscripts and these must be printed before the perishable material on which they are written is completely destroyed. I believe the same is the case with the other languages. A band of scholars who are experts in the line must take up this kind of editorial work.

I shall pass over literary criticism in silence, for no respectable work at all seems to have been done in this field, so far. I desire to make one observation only. We seem to live in the middle ages, and Sanskritic writers like Dandin still hold the field. No fresh outlook seems possible to us and we are allowing ourselves to be tied down by shackles forged in an age and under conditions far different from ours. Under the crude notion that we are improving upon Dandin, we have made endless but meaningless divisions and subdivisions and in the process we have lost the art of literary appreciation. Literary criticism as developed in the west must save us and guide us, if we are not to lose one of the greatest pleasures vouchsafed to mankind. We must not forget, at the same time, that Dandin and other rhetoricians have a legitimate place in the history of literary criticism and of literary technique.

The next task I shall mention is the undertaking of a good literary history, e.g. history of Tamil

literature. Of the books that exist in Tamil, mention must be made, despite defects, of Mr. K. S. Sreenivasa Pillai's 'Tamil Varalaru' in Tamil and Mr. M. Sreenivasa Iyengar's 'Tamil Studies' in English. All the rest are, barring a few exceptions, either scrappy or carelessly written or are replete with exploded theories. In Kannada Rao Bahadur Narasimhachariar, in Telugu Veeresalingam Pantulu, in Malayalam Ulloor Parameswara Iyer and others have written valuable literary histories. A good deal of preliminary work has to be done before the task is begun in earnest. First, all the contributions in journals and all the books bearing upon the subject must be collected and studied. Secondly, a catalogue raisonne of all published works (including incunabula) and of unpublished works must be prepared. I must say here a word about the collecting, preserving and cataloguing of cajan and paper manuscripts in Tamil and allied languages. The Madras Government has done a grievous wrong in not creating a separate agency for each of our languages. Time was when the work was entrusted to a professor of Sanskrit whose knowledge of the Dravidian languages was very limited and whose time was fully taken up with his professorial duties in his college. That he had been able to do something in his capacity as a curator of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library

speaks to his broad-minded spirit and his sense of duty. But now a committee is put in charge and its curator is altogether innocent of any knowledge of Dravidian languages. If this state of affairs continues for sometime more, all the manuscripts in the country will be destroyed and our priceless heritage will be lost to us for ever. The peripatetic section of the Oriental Manuscript Library staff must be, some of them, Tamil students capable of dealing with MSS and a scholar of eminence who is an expert in reading and editing manuscripts must be put in charge of the Tamil section. So also with the other languages. The honorary curatorship was hardly satisfactory and the present arrangement is worse. I hope the new national government in the province will go into this matter and make suitable alterations. Let me resume. Thirdly, a complete bibliography according to subjects must be made ready. Cataloguing and bibliography may be done on the models of 'The Year's Work in English Studies' edited for the English Association by F. S. Boas and 'Annual Bibliography of English language and literature' edited for the Modern Humanities Research Association by Angus Macdonald. But *our* catalogue and bibliography must include, not only language and literature, but all subjects. Needless to say that these must be brought up-to-date and continued year after year in future. Fourthly, chronological problems must

be tackled afresh. Here in Tamil a wrong tilt has been given originally by men of undoubted learning and talents; and it has to be righted now. If it be merely a question of evaluating literary evidence, the matter would be simple. It is more than that. With a section of Tamilians—not necessarily scholars—the dates of works like *Tirukkural* and *Silappadikaram* are matters of faith, on which they are willing to stake more than their honour. Nothing this side of the first or second century A. D. would satisfy them and if any scholar dares to suggest a later date, he is held to be a traitor. A poisoned atmosphere is thus created. Research is stifled and truth struggles for its very life. But the duty of a scholar is clear and he has to fortify himself with the noble words:

‘They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.’

Speaking of historical material, I record with pleasure the invaluable services rendered by the Epigraphical department and by Messrs. P. Sundaram Pillai, V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, M. Raghava Iyengar, K. G. Sankaran and S. Desikavinyaka'n Pillai in respect of Tamil, by Dr. N. Venkataramanayya and others in respect of Telugu and by Rao Bahadur R. Narasimhachariar and others in respect of Kannada. Prof. Nilakanta Sastri's 'Cholas' must

be specially mentioned. But there still remains a great deal of work to be done. The Epigraphical department is chary of lending estampages to scholars. Hundreds of inscriptions copied have yet to see the light of day. Hundreds of inscriptions are yet to be copied. All the inscriptions must be carefully edited and annotated by scholars well-versed in South Indian languages. Besides inscriptions, we have historical poems and diaries. These also have to be critically edited. It is a pity that Anandarangam Pillai's diary in Tamil is still a sealed book to us. A unique piece of literature throwing light on the commercial activity and the eventful political life of South India during the 18th century, and affording considerable material for a study of Tamil colloquialism during the period, the diary demands our immediate attention. I hope the Government of Madras will take the earliest opportunity to make arrangements for its publication. Or at least the record office, in whose custody this work remains, may be directed to give facilities to scholars to copy and publish it.

In research under literature, I shall touch upon only one more subject and that is the comparative study of literature. This concerns all the Dravidian languages in a special manner. In an essay on 'The Teaching of English Literature', Prof. Dowden declared that he

“would have the student start with a *General Sketch of European literature*, somewhat resembling Mr. Freeman’s *General Sketch of European History* in its aim and scope and manner of treatment..... When Boccaccio,’ he went on, ‘is spoken of in connection with Chaucer, when Tasso or Ariosto is spoken of in connection with Spenser, or Boileau in connection with Dryden or Pope, or Carlyle in connection with Goethe, he ought at least to be able to place Boccaccio and Tasso and Ariosto and Boileau and Goethe aright in the general movement of European literature, and in some measure to conceive aright the relation of each to the literary movement in our own country.’

Judged by the above standard, the scholars of the three languages, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam will pass the test so far as Sanskrit literature is concerned. But I am doubtful whether the same can be said of the Tamil scholar of the present day. So far as Dravidian literatures other than his own are concerned, every one of these scholars, without exception, is labouring under the same serious disability. Fancy a Dravidian scholar not knowing anything at all of Valmiki, of Vyasa and of Kalidasa; nor of Valluvar and Kamban; nor anything

of Tikkana and Nannaya; nor of Pampa, Ranna and Ponna; nor of Ezhuttacchan! Such a state of affairs should not be allowed to continue. Comparative study of Dravidian literature and of Indian literature will certainly widen and enrich our scholarship. It will break down the thick wall of prejudice behind which our scholars are immuring themselves. Research will gather a new significance and new nobility. Let us try to understand and appreciate one another's literature and thus honour one another.

Before proceeding further, I should like to mention an important item of work and that is Translation. This has not sufficiently attracted the attention of our scholars. No doubt there are some works in Tamil, in this field, the most notable of them being the English translation of some Tamil classics by G. U. Pope and of *Tirukkural* by V. V. S. Iyer. A good many lyrics from the Tamil classics have been done into English by Messrs. V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, K. G. Sesha Iyer and P. N. Appuswami. I am, of course, ignoring translations which had better never been made. A proper translation bureau must be established. Tamil works must be translated into Hindi and English; likewise works in foreign languages must be done into Tamil. Thus an inter-traffic in ideas must be established. In other Dravidian languages also, translation work must be taken up in earnest. This

is an urgent work and no time should be lost in establishing the bureau mentioned above.

I shall now take up the more complicated research in languages. In general, I may say that we have not made any headway, except in a few branches of study. Let me pass in review the more important of the several branches. First, etymological studies. Here the very atmosphere is uncongenial, so far as Tamil is concerned. An illustration will carry conviction. A fundamental assumption is made by our 'scholars' that any word containing a trilled medial 'ṛ' is a genuine native word. That this assumption is only partially true can be easily proved. The Sanskrit pida (पीडा) is the Tamil word பீழு ; the Sanskrit sirshaka (शीर्षक) is the Tamil word சிகுழிகை ; the Sanskrit phala is the Tamil புழு. If anybody follows up these phonetic equivalences and deduces that the Sanskrit glaha (ग्लह) is the Tamil குழக்கு, at once he is a marked man and pronounced a pro-Sanskritist. Let me note that this is a late word occurring in a late sangam work, Kalittogai, that its first use is in the sense of a place where dice is played, that Panini enjoined the application of the Sanskrit word especially to dice playing and that this great grammarian flourished about eight centuries earlier than the first recorded use of this word in Tamil. In the face of these indisputable facts and chrono-

logy, the majority of Tamil scholars hold that the word *குகில்* is a genuine native and, worse, do not brook any suggestion to the contrary. Such an atmosphere is hardly conducive to research work. I believe this condition does not obtain in other languages of the Dravidian group. Despite this unfavourable condition, etymological studies are made in Tamil language and that is a good sign. I may mention here that the late Mr. R. Swaminatha Iyer has produced a work of great value. We may occasionally go wrong and to err is human; for instance, following the curious working of the popular fancy, a scholar of eminence gives a bizarre derivation. The Tamil word, *mayil*, meaning peacock is obviously connected with the Sanskrit *मयूर* which is a Rig-vedic word. Yet it is taken as a compound of Tamil '*மர*' meaning beauty (of colour) and '*இல்*' meaning shelter the word indicating 'the shelter which the (beautiful) feathers afforded the bird when necessary.' Poetical fancy is no derivation. The etymology is made under the impression that '*மர*' is a Tamil word. Unfortunately for the speculator, it is the Sanskrit *मा* denoting Lakshmi who is always associated with beauty. So this makes the word a hybrid, and a very uncouth hybrid at that. If we derive the Rigvedic *मयूर* from the Tamil *mayil*, as a western scholar does, we shall be casting

chronology to the winds and floundering in method. It is regrettable that this learned scholar with his vast linguistic equipment should occasionally permit himself such extravagances. Another linguist of great repute has derived 'hanuman' from ஆண்மந்தி in Tamil, meaning male monkey. Apart from other objections, the proposed Tamil original is a contradiction in terms; for மந்தி, in early Tamil, means female monkey and ஆண்மந்தி would be ludicrous both in nature and in language. I may make this observation, in passing. The very few foreign scholars who have been attracted to Dravidic studies cannot be expected to have any intimate knowledge of the Dravidian languages. Even with this serious limitation, their contributions deserve honourable mention. The names of Bishop Caldwell, Dr. Gundert, Brown and of Kittel must be reassuring. Some of their conclusions are no doubt marred by serious defects; but their method, their wide knowledge and their close grip of details deserve praise. We may well follow them in their method and make correct etymological studies.

Closely connected with these etymological studies is the study of place-names, surnames, etc. We have in Tamil what are called Sthala-puranas in plenty and their authors are dealing actually with place-names. Only instead of patient research in the history of a place, they have drawn

freely upon their imagination and woven a thick veil round the true origin of place-names! We have been long content with these fibs and only quite recently, a book has appeared, which tries to rend the veil of mystery. It follows the puranic method and contains flagrant errors. For instance, Veli (வேலி) in Tirunelveli (திருநெல்வேலி) has nothing to do with land-measure as the author says, but simply means fence or enclosure. Even the Purana of the place interprets it correctly. In திருப்பைஞ்சீலி, ஞீலி is construed as plantain tree, following Sivasthalamanjari. No Tamil word, according to Tolkappiyam and Nannul, can begin with ஞ and so ஞீலி must be a variant of நீலி. But neither word bear this sense anywhere in Tamil literature. This significance must be of a very recent date. We are led to suspect that it is an anachronism. The Tamil Lexicon gives the provenance of the word பைஞ்சீலம் as 'local', which is belied by its very form. The matter should have received careful consideration. முத்துப்பேட்டை is interpreted as an ancient port noted for pearl-fishery. There is indeed no authority for this view. The name is capable of a different interpretation. Muttu or Muthia is a common personal name among Tamilians and very probably, the பேட்டை is called after this name. More light should have been obtained before venturing a definite explanation like pearl-fishery. Vellai (வெள்ளை) has no doubt.

the meaning of 'Baladeva' in Tamil, besides other meanings. But to see worship of Baladeva in all place-names where this word occurs is absurd. Want of proper investigation, want of study and reflection and want of method are serious defects which mere graces of style can never atone for. Errors are likely to be perpetuated by dilettantism. It is better we acquaint ourselves with the methods of work which western investigators have pursued in this line of research. A study of the works issued by the Place-Name Society in England would be of immense service. When sufficient advance is made, the investigation may be systematised and a dictionary of Place-Names may be undertaken.

I should not be going into these details but for the immensity of the stake. An etymological dictionary on historical lines can never be accomplished while the conditions indicated above prevail. Father Gnanaprakasar's dictionary—only two fascicules have appeared—is a sad comment on the existing state of philological research in Tamil.

The Tamil Lexicon, published under the authority of the University of Madras, is not in any sense an etymological dictionary. But it is a monumental work. The sources already utilised in previous dictionaries have been carefully examined afresh. New sources have been studied

and utilised. In the treatment of words, considerable improvement has been made. The arrangement of meanings, the definitions both in English and Tamil, etymology and cognates, illustrative quotations—in all these respects, the lexicon is a great advance and I may say it is the one solid achievement in Tamil within recent years. There are, no doubt, shortcomings which have to be remedied in future editions. A concise dictionary is an urgent need and the Madras University is making arrangements for its early preparation and publication. A dictionary of scientific and technical terms is also an urgent necessity and for the past six years, it has been engaging the serious attention of the Government of Madras. Of the other kinds of dictionaries noted in the table, nothing has been done. All of them are of great general utility and they are best done by a syndicate of scholars. I must not omit to mention here the Suryaraya Nighantu in Telugu and also the lexicographical work in Kannada which the Mysore Government is projecting. The Travancore University also is planning a Malayalam lexicon.

The affiliation* of the Primitive Dravidian is a major problem beset with doubts and difficulties. Most of our scholars think that Caldwell's Scythian theory is the last word on the subject. No doubt

* Summarised from Dr. Burrow's 'Dravidic Studies.'

the learned bishop was the founder of the comparative study of the Dravidian languages. Besides, he was the first to study systematically the inter-relationship of the languages comprised in the Dravidian group, though others before him felt vaguely that these languages were all connected. He was a pioneer of outstanding abilities and his name will ever be remembered with gratitude and reverence by all scholars of Dravidian languages. This does not mean that there is no room for further enquiry. Caldwell was himself quite modest in his claims. Speaking of the Scythian-affiliation, he admitted the possibility of being misled by accidental assonances and claimed rather to have pointed the way to future research than to have demonstrated the relationship with any finality. A similar conclusion was reached by Max Muller who used the term 'Turanian' in the sense in which Caldwell used 'Scythian.'

But the theory was rejected by P. Hunfalvy who explained his reasons most lucidly and ably in a paper on the study of the Turanian languages. Dr. Sten Konow remarks in his linguistic survey of India (vol. iv, p. 282: 1906) that 'with regard to the Dravidian languages the attempt to connect them with other linguistic families outside India is now generally recognised as a failure and we must still consider them as an isolated family.' In 1925,

Caldwell's theory was again taken up by F. O. Schrader who confined himself to a comparison of the Dravidian languages on the one hand and the Uralian languages, i.e., Finno-Ugrian etc., on the other. E. Lewy followed with a destructive criticism which had considerable effect. Shortly afterwards, Hevesy, a Hungarian scholar, tried to prove that the Munda or Kolarian languages were related to Finno-Ugrian. If this be established, it would indicate that the Dravidian and the Kolarian languages were ultimately connected. But the general opinion seems to be that this connection is not established. In the words of Prof. S. K. Chatterjee, 'the original Dravidian speakers, according to most recent views, belong to the west. Their original home was in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The ancient Lycians of Asia Minor who were colonists from Crete called themselves Trmmli.' Thus it may be assumed that the Dravidians were connected with the Pre-Hellenic Cretans. This ethnic relationship suggests the possibility of a linguistic connection also.

Considering the nature of this kind of enquiry, it is best left in the hands of experts whose ethnological and philological equipment specially fit them for the task. The Dravidian scholar is naturally interested in the more immediate problem

viz., the relative positions of the main South Indian languages in reference to the original or primitive Dravidian. In the infancy of philological studies, it was fondly imagined that out of the womb of Tamil, the other Dravidian languages sprang and that Tamil must be considered the primitive Dravidian. But this position is philologically unsound. A primitive Dravidian language, as distinguished from Tamil and far older than that, has to be posited. That being accepted, the South Indian scholars are now waging war for the right of primogeniture of their own respective languages. My learned friend Mr. K. Ramakrishnayya of the Madras University inclines to the view that Telugu is the earliest language to separate from the primitive Dravidian and hence is of far greater antiquity than Tamil. I have heard Malayalam scholars making a similar claim with regard to *their* language also. But the seniority and antiquity of Tamil are well vouched for and Dr. Caldwell's view is hardly disputable. Still it is best to remember that our sister-languages have entered a claim which demands enquiry and consideration. The question must be approached dispassionately from a scholarly point of view.

A problem of greater importance has arisen out of the recent discoveries of Mohenjo Daro (Sindh) and Harappa (Punjab). It has been suggested with great plausibility that the Indus valley civilisation

revealed by the above discoveries is Dravidian in origin. Admittedly it is Pre-Vedic and Pre-Aryan. Of the peoples that had anything to do with the Indus valley in Pre-Aryan times, we know only of three and they are the Negrito in the palaeolithic stage of culture, the Austro-Asiatics in the neolithic stage and the Dravidians who were city-builders and organisers in peaceful life. The Indus valley civilisation is 'of a remarkably high type with well-planned cities of brick-built houses in more than one story and with underground drainage, with writing as a widely practised art, with pottery decorated and painted in various styles, with peculiar systems of burial obtaining among the people and with all the paraphernalia of civilised life including dolls for children.' Such a civilisation could hardly be attributed either to the Negrito or to the Austro-Asiatics. Moreover, this civilisation shows noteworthy affinities with the Mediterranean and West-Asian culture. 'The Dravidians, apart from the Mohenjo Daro context, have been suggested as being a Mediterranean people.' All these would make it appear that the great city-cultures of the Punjab and Sindh were built by the Dravidians before the advent of the Aryans into India. 'Whether this assumption is correct or not will be settled finally only when one can read the Mohenjo Daro script and when the

language is proved to be the source or an early form of the present-day Dravidian languages. It will not do to read Old Tamil straight away into the inscriptions on this assumption, as Father Heras is doing. Such an attempt has no value in serious epigraphy and linguistics. It lacks all sound philological method.'

I have closely followed the views of Prof. S. K. Chatterjee in his book 'Indo-Aryan and Hindi'. I think his position is, in the main, correct. If at any time the Dravidian origin of the Indus valley civilisation becomes a proven fact, the consequent changes in our outlook and the new problems we shall have to face will be revolutionary in character. We, as Dravidian scholars, have a part to perform in reaching a definite solution and that brings me to the next topic I propose to deal with here.

Efforts are being made, now and then, to reconstruct what is known as proto-Dravidian or primitive Dravidian. Even with regard to the Indo-European languages where comparative philology has attained a high degree of exactitude, the result of such attempts are far from satisfactory. Prof. Pedersen has made this clear in his work on linguistic method. With regard to our Dravidian languages, comparative philology is still in the making. Even an exhaustive study of comparative vocabulary has not been made. The cognates have just been

collected and studied by that erudite scholar, Mr. Ramakrishnayya, and his work on this subject is a notable contribution. But his list is not by any means exhaustive. Phonetic laws must be scientifically deduced from a study of these cognates and comparative vocabulary, before we can think of comparative philology in Dravidian languages. Rao Bahadur R. Narasimhachariar in his history of the Kannada language and Dr. C. Narayana Rao in his history of the Telugu language have done valuable work in this connection. Messrs. V. G. Suryanarayana Sastri and L. V. Ramaswami Iyer have similarly done here much useful work in respect of Tamil and Malayalam. This study can and must be done only by our scholars trained in philological method. But it must necessarily be a work of co-operation among scholars in the several languages belonging to the Dravidian family. There are facilities for this kind of work, only in the Madras University and I hope the authorities there will make suitable arrangements for such co-operation. I know something is being done by the scholars of this university and I hope they will push on the work more vigorously and systematically and in the soundest of philological methods. Reconstruction of primitive Dravidian must be based upon the results of such an investigation. Only then shall we be able to help in the solution of the Mohenjo Daro problem. The Dravidian civilisation will be more

of a certainty and its antiquity will be pushed back at least two or three millenniums.

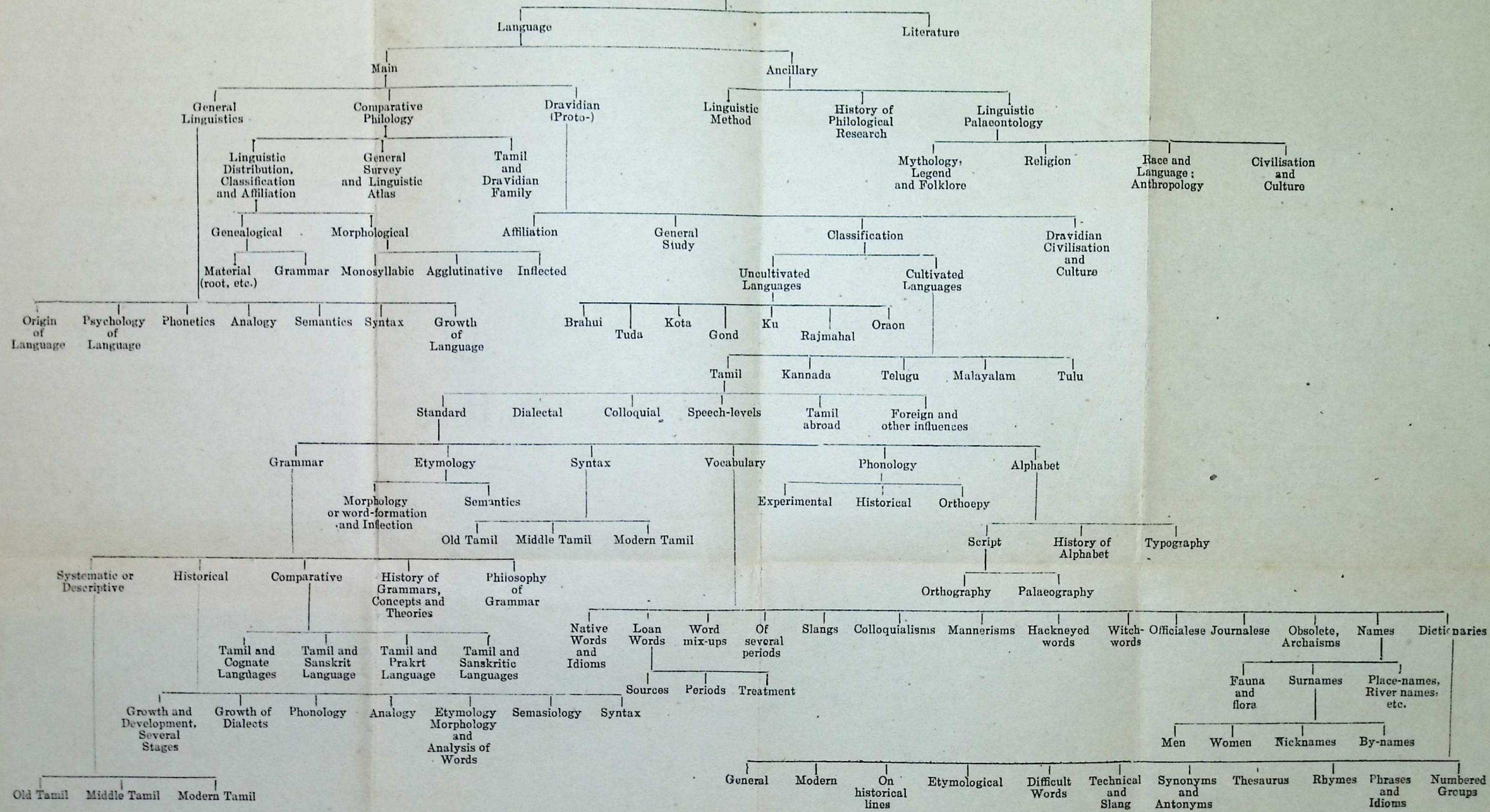
One more field of research where co-operation among Dravidian scholars may be helpful, I have reserved to the last and that is Grammar, both historical and comparative. As regards the former, very little has been done. 'Confronted with the facts of modern speech; the philologist attempts to penetrate behind these, in order to arrive at an explanation of them. He discovers, in the course of his investigations, that the most characteristic feature of language is fluidity, in consequence of which it is perpetually changing'—that, for example, Tamil of to-day differs greatly from that of Sangam poets or even of Valluvar. 'He is thus enabled to throw light on the history of the language, and ultimately to trace its development, through various ramifications, from its origin down to the present day. This particular task is the province of *historical grammar*.' It is not enough if the grammars written in different periods are alone studied. Our classical grammars are greatly influenced by Sanskrit Grammars. There is no guarantee that all the linguistic phenomena in our languages have been observed and explained. Nor is there any guarantee that the structure of the languages has been properly studied. We must first study the literatures of the several periods in

their historical setting, observe their linguistic laws and write systematic or descriptive grammars. Of course, our grammatical classics will be our guides and help us in the preparation of the work. Our ancients did not conceive of language as being always in a state of flux and so they tried to check the development of language by imposing artificial laws. We must 'avoid the besetting sins of such grammarians, pedantry and dogmatism.' Then these systematic grammars must be studied in their chronological order and, on the basis of such a study, a historical grammar must be written. Prof. Jespersen's words are relevant here : 'it is the pride of the linguistic science of the last hundred years or so, that it has superseded older methods by historical grammar, in which phenomena are not only *described* but *explained*, and it cannot be denied that the new point of view, by showing the inter-connection of grammatical phenomena previously isolated, has obtained many new and important results.' If a proper historical grammar of Tamil were written, it would show the utter impossibility of the hypothetical Tamil sentence, 'Sandikappu vai emantu irukkar' (சாந்திக் காப்பு வரும் எமாந்து இருக்கார்) said to be found in Ancient Egypt about B.C. 1500.

Another branch of the same study is Comparative Grammar which supplements the evidence

APPENDIX I

RESEARCH IN LANGUAGES



that is accessible to us in historical sources, by connecting languages whose common 'ancestor' is lost to tradition. Bishop Caldwell's Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian languages is the classic in this field. The foundations of Dravidian philology have been solidly and firmly laid by this distinguished investigator. He believed rightly that it was not possible to understand thoroughly any one language of this group without a knowledge of the others and he regarded that comparative grammar was not only a thing useful in its own way but a real necessity. It is a pity that no one followed his footsteps and carried on the work so well begun by him. But it is time now that some competent scholar took up this work. Since 1875 when the second edition of the Comparative Grammar was brought out by the author, substantial progress has been made in linguistic science, especially in method. In Tamil, *Tolkappiyam*, *Sangam Classics* and several other important works have been edited and made available to scholars working in various fields. Epigraphy and history have made considerable progress. Several scholars have devoted themselves to research and our knowledge has increased greatly. In other Dravidian languages also, we note similar progress. Any comparative grammar will have to take note of these advances. In the light of such fresh knowledge, Bishop Caldwell's book calls for a drastic

revision. In fact a fresh grammar on comparative lines has long been overdue.

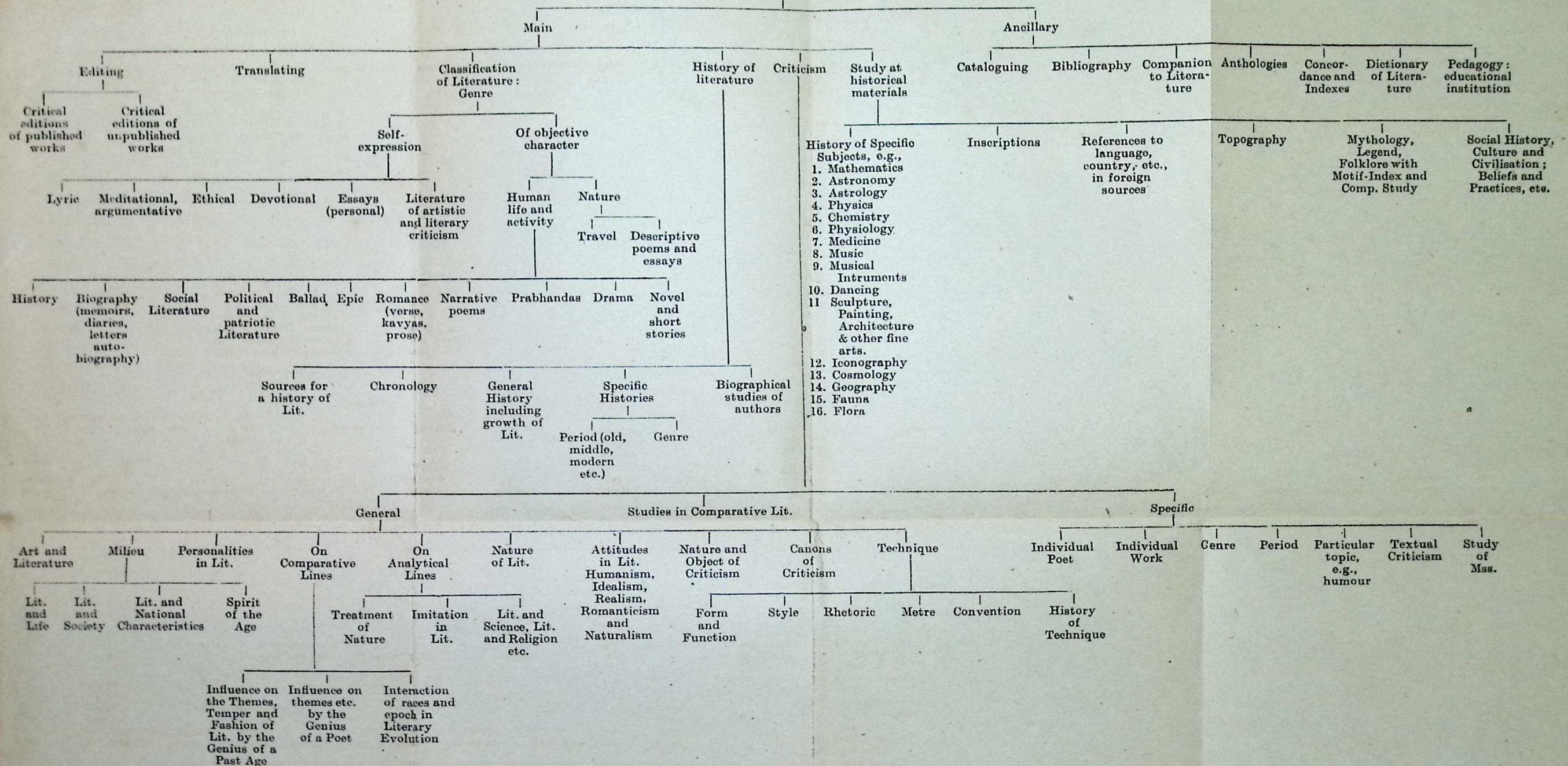
The Tamil area has two universities, the Madras and the Annamalai Universities. The Telugu, the Kannada and the Malayalam areas have each a University. I am referring to the Andhra, the Mysore and the Travancore Universities. It would be very desirable and profitable if these Universities concert measures for co-ordinated work for the advancement of research in Dravidian languages.

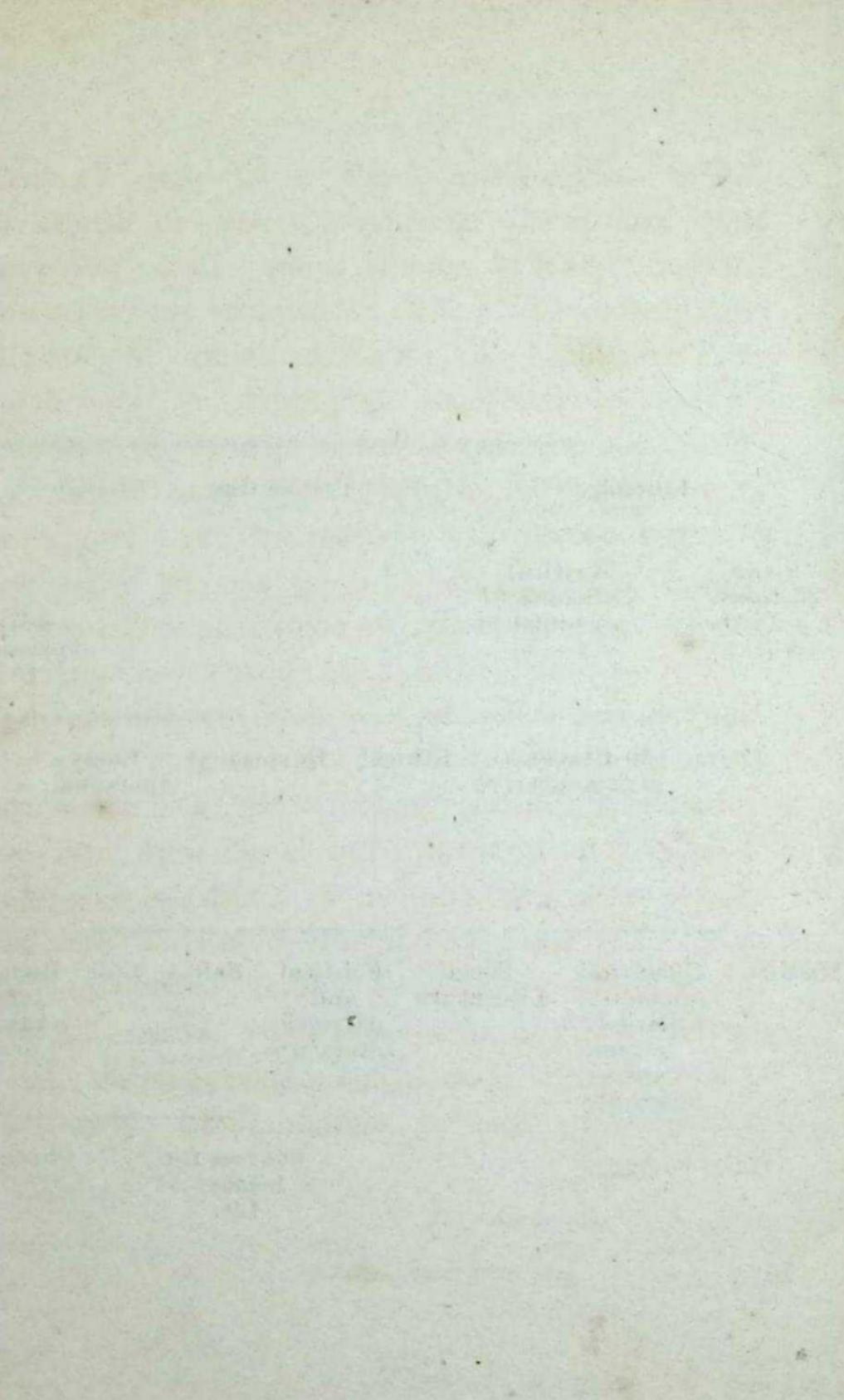
My task is finished. It has been my endeavour to indicate the scope of research in Dravidian languages and literatures, the vastness of this particular branch of study, and to pass in review the most important fields, glancing at what has been done and what may be taken up immediately for study and research. There may be shortcomings, omissions and commissions for which I crave your indulgence. You have given me a patient hearing for which I thank you most sincerely. I wish Dravidian scholars had attended this conference in greater numbers if only for the purpose of contacting the savants who are working in several fields of oriental research.

• Gentlemen, just now I spoke of Dravidian scholars. That term should not be taken to mean that there are pure Dravidians at the present

APPENDIX II

RESEARCH IN LITERATURE





day as contra-distinguished from pure Aryans. Both are merely convenient terms to denote a conceptual fact of ancient times. Racial purity is an impossibility. Let us not confuse the past with the present, the dead with the living. We are all students of Dravidian languages, of Dravidian culture and civilisation, just as we have our brethren present here who are students of Aryan languages, of Aryan culture and civilisation. The two great streams have commingled long ago and what we have at the present day is a composite culture and civilisation. So also linguistic purity is a chimera. Many diverse elements have gone into the making of our languages. Such a historical view will give us that scientific detachment which is so necessary to the pursuit of truth. Let us all work and co-operate with one another in a strictly scientific spirit. Let truth be our sole objective. Let us add to the sum total of human knowledge by constant devotion to our appointed work. Let us be true servants of our noble mother-tongues. Let us be worthy sons of mother India. May our tribe increase !

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